

# TERRITORIAL COHESION THROUGH SPATIAL POLICIES: AN ANALYSIS WITH CULTURAL THEORY AND CLUMSY SOLUTIONS

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**Abstract:** *The European Territorial Cohesion Policy has been the subject of numerous debates in recent years. Most contributions focus on understanding the term itself and figuring out what is behind it, or arguing for or against a stronger formal competence of the European Union in this field. This article will leave out these aspects and pay attention to (undefined and legally non-binding) conceptual elements of territorial cohesion, focusing on the challenge of linking it within spatial policies and organising the relations. Therefore, the theoretical approach of Cultural Theory and its concept of clumsy solution are applied to overcome the dilemma of typical dichotomies by adding a third and a fourth (but not a fifth) perspective. In doing so, normative contradictions between different rational approaches can be revealed, explained and approached with the concept of 'clumsy solutions'. This contribution aims at discussing how this theoretical approach helps us explain and frame a coalition between the Territorial Cohesion Policy and spatial policies. This approach contributes to finding the best way of linking and organising policies, although the solution might be clumsy according to the different rationalities involved.*

**Keywords:** Cultural theory, territorial cohesion, spatial planning, planning theory, policy analysis, public policy

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## INTRODUCTION

The Lisbon Treaty introduced territorial cohesion as the third dimension of the major objective of European policy, besides the social and economic cohesions. The term describes the territorial dimension and serves as a leitmotif for the spatial development of the EU, in spite of the absence of formal institutions to enforce it. It is acknowledged that territorial cohesion needs to be implemented indirectly, via sectoral policies (Spit & Zoete, 2009, p. 20). Thus, European spatial governance depends on the mobilization of coalitions and partnerships across the vertical and horizontal levels and governance structures (Smith, 2007, p. 1020; Heinelt & Lang, 2011). But how could a coalition between the European Territorial Cohesion Policy and particular spatially relevant sector policies function?

Contemporary academic discourses on territorial cohesion often focus on the lacking formal competence of the European Union in spatial planning (Oosterlynck, 2009; Pallagst, 2006; Vanolo, 2010), the vague or missing definition of the term itself, and its function as a leitmotif or planning doctrine (Zonneveld & Waterhout, 2005; Battis & Kersten, 2008). Often, the idea of vertical and horizontal integration of different spatial policies via territorial cohesion is promoted (Robert et al., 2001; Siehr 2009), although already the delimitation of public policy problems is complex and politically loaded (Vesely 2007). But the discourse on territorial cohesion also reveals that European policy can achieve such a coordinating function only through a mutual relationship with spatial policies such as environmental policy, regional policy or transportation policy. In other words, because of the lack of a strong institutional foundation and the term's vague definition, territorial cohesion crucially depends on coalitions with strong spatial policies.

A theory is missing that explains how such a European policy of territorial cohesion via spatial policies could function. This research study is an attempt to provide such a theory by applying Cultural Theory<sup>2</sup>. Cultural Theory is a social-constructivist theory that is built on the assumption that every social

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<sup>2</sup> By Cultural Theory in capital letters, we refer to the work by Mary Douglas, Aaron Wildavsky and fellows, as opposed to the more general field of cultural theory.

situation can be described in terms of four ideal-typical rationalities: individualism, egalitarianism, hierarchism, and fatalism. Therefore, it can be used to distinguish between existing approaches. Recently, the theory has been further developed by Thompson, Ney, Verweij and others with the concept of ‘clumsy solutions’ (Ney, 2003; Verweij & Thompson, 2006; Verweij, 2011). It is discussed in this contribution how this concept can help developing a comprehensive European policy of territorial cohesion.

The remaining part of this paper consists of three major sections. Section 2 explains the basic features of Cultural Theory and its categorization of four different approaches. The following section sums up the discussion on the institutional weakness of territorial cohesion and on the definition of the term. It concludes with the need to establish coalitions with spatially relevant sectoral policies to implement the European policy of territorial cohesion. The third section then presents the ideal-typical coalitions of territorial cohesion and spatial policies. In this section we also explore theoretically how Cultural Theory’s concept of clumsy solutions recommends pursuing a comprehensive European Territorial Cohesion Policy. In the Conclusion, research gaps are identified to enable future empirical research on this topic.

## CULTURAL THEORY

Although Cultural Theory originates from anthropology and has been much used in research on risk perception (Douglas and Wildavsky, 1983; Renn, 2008; Rippl, 2001), its relevance for planning theory has also been proven (Davy, 1997; Hendriks, 1999; Zwanikken, 2001; Hartmann, 2012).

Why should Cultural Theory be applied to territorial cohesion? Establishing coalitions between policy fields is difficult because of manifold uncertainties, complexities and normative biases (see e.g. Hillier, 2010; Gunder & Hillier, 2009; Roo, de & Silva 2010), and it has been described as a ‘wicked problem’ (Rittel & Webber, 1973; Hartmann, 2012). In social and political science, there are two conceptual camps when it comes to solving such wicked issues (Verweij, 2011, p. 35): One camp builds on the assumption that societies function on the same or similar premises; the other camp acknowledges pluralism and assumes that the complexity of society impedes the development of policy solutions. Proponents of rational choice theory or the *homo oeconomicus*, typical of the first camp, approach policy issues in order to find one perfect-fitting solution. Frame analysis as a well-known example of the second camp is of-

ten attributed to Erving Goffman<sup>3</sup>; Cultural Theory also belongs to theories acknowledging pluralism in social situations, rejecting approaches from the first camp. There are parallels: both Cultural Theory and frame analysis put values, beliefs, and perceptions central in the analysis of social situations, instead of rejecting them as irrelevant or irrational; also, both regard interpretations of the world as dynamic (Benford & Snow, 2000). As opposed to Goffman’s framing concept which tries to explain or focus on the question where different interpretations (or frames) of the world stem from, Cultural Theory provides a simple analytical scheme that allows reducing pluralism to a manageable number of four. Thus, we are able to analyse pluralism without rejecting it<sup>4</sup> (Douglas, 1999) and without getting trapped in usual dichotomies (state vs. market, top-down vs. bottom-up, macro vs. micro), which often lead to normative discussions about the preferred option (Thompson et al., 1990, p. 21). Another important feature of Cultural Theory that differs from frame analysis is that it contends that the analytical scheme it provides is an exclusive reduction of pluralism and a generic model that can be applied to every social situation<sup>5</sup>. In addition to this analytical aspect, Cultural Theory also offers a conceptual model for policy path towards solutions, namely clumsy solutions (see below). So, although frame analysis and Cultural Theory have the same pedigree in social constructivism, there are also important differences enabling Cultural Theory to provide a substantial contribution to policy solutions of wicked problems (Hartmann, 2012). In the following, Cultural Theory shall be outlined in its basic features.

Cultural Theory acknowledges that there are different rational solutions to policy problems because stakeholders perceive the world through four different rationalities (Thompson et al., 1990). Thus, it ‘can be used to detect and locate actual positions taken in political or policy debate’ (Hendriks, 1999, p. 428). The anthropologist Mary Douglas is acknowledged to be the founder of this theory, and Thompson, Wildavsky, and Ellis are further important supporters of this theory; see also Schwarz & Thompson, 1990; Thompson et al., 1990; Ellis & Thompson, 1997. As mentioned earlier, the theory distinguishes four ideal-typical (Hendriks, 1999, p. 428) ‘cultures’ (Ellis & Thompson, 1997) or ‘rationalities’ (Davy, 2008): hierarchism, individualism, egalitarianism and fatalism. These rationalities represent different ways of ‘organizing’ and perceiving social situations (Thompson, 2008, p. 39). It is important to mention that the

3 There are different strands of the framing approach, but many reach back to a famous book by Goffman (1974); Benford and Snow (2000).

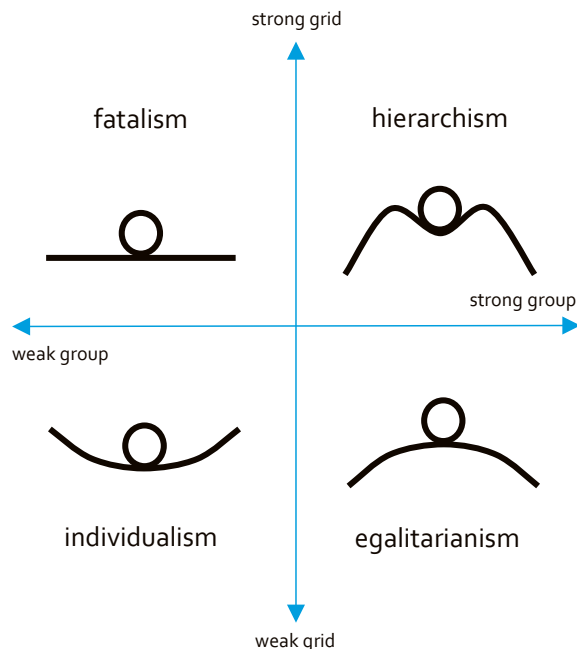
4 Mary Douglas (1999) calls the grid and group scheme of Cultural Theory a ‘parsimonious’ model.

5 Herein also lies a frequently criticized aspect of Cultural Theory.

theory does not distinguish degrees of rationality, use a dichotomy of rational vs. irrational, or rank the four rationalities, but rather considers them equally rational. In this way, the four categories help us analyse pluralism (Douglas, 1999, p. 411) and thus understand the inherently polyrational ways of 'how institutions think' (Douglas, 1986).

Basically, the theory is built on the assumption that every social action can be measured on two independent dimensions, 'grid' and 'group'. 'Grid' indicates the extent to which a decision maker is bound (actually: binds him/herself) to externally imposed structures, rules and prescriptions. Accordingly, a high grid stands for heteronymous decision-making; and a weak grid refers to a high degree of self-determination. The second dimension is 'group'. It indicates whether an individual is likely to join a group or prefers to act on their own. The higher the group dimension, the more group-bound is the decision made (Hartmann, 2012; Thompson et al., 1990). Since the two dimensions are independent, they form a diagram with two axes and four quadrants. Each of the four rationalities can be located in one quadrant and can be described by a combination of the two dimensions, grid and group (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1** Cultural Theory's four rationalities



Each rationality is driven by particular expectations about how the world reacts to interventions (Hartmann, 2012). The rationalities are best illustrated by pictograms showing a ball in a landscape. The ball represents the world; the landscape represents the behavioural characteristics of the world following interventions (Thompson et al., 1990, pp. 25–37). Such pictograms depict the four rationalities and their perception of the world in a very useful way<sup>6</sup>, helping us understand their differences in perceptions and conceptualizing. The reification of the rationalities is used here to simplify the text. Actually, the subject that envisions the world in a particular way is a person that acts out the respective rationality in a particular situation. The following brief descriptions of the four rationalities are largely derived from Schwarz & Thompson (1990).

- Individualism sees the landscape as a valley; the world lies on the bottom of this valley. This is a rather robust situation. Accordingly, individuals can experiment with the world, and each fault provides also an opportunity. There is no inherent need to cooperate or act in a group; self-determination and individual liberty are the important values. Individualism follows a neo-liberal concept of justice and pursues market-based management approaches.
- Egalitarianism envisions the world as lying on top of a hill in an unstable equilibrium. There is an inherent threat that even a small disturbance will destroy the equilibrium irreversibly. From this perspective, it is rational not to experiment: there is no scope for failures as they are irreversible and have severe consequences. In the grid-and-group scheme, this rationality is assigned to a high degree of group and a low degree of grid adhesion. Egalitarianism emphasizes community, and neglects government interventions and market schemes.
- Hierarchism pictures the world lying in a small dip on top of a hill. This is a relatively robust equilibrium. But beyond certain boundaries – beyond the dip – the world crashes down and the equilibrium is destroyed. A rational response to such a world is to set rules and regulations. Hierarchism therefore needs strong group adhesion and a strong grid. According to this rationality, nested levels of hierarchy are important to maintain the equilibrium. So, hierarchism is a perspective that regards regulations and rules as necessary to govern society and markets.

<sup>6</sup> Actually the pictograms originate from work on visions of nature. Thompson and colleagues added these pictograms in the 1990s to Cultural Theory (Thompson, Ellis, and Wildavsky, 1990). Originally, only three such visions existed, and there is a debate among Cultural Theory scholars if the fatalistic rationality is actually represented properly with the flat landscape. This, however, shall not be discussed here. For further literature on this, the reader is advised to check recent publications on Cultural Theory (Ney, 2003; Ney and Verweij, 2010).

- Finally, fatalism believes in a capricious world. Fatalists do not prefer a specific concept of justice, as it is not enforceable in a complex world, and instead rely on fate and luck. The perception that we cannot know how the world reacts, and we cannot influence events, is depicted by a flat landscape in which the world (the ball) lies. It is unpredictable whether it will roll to the right or to the left, or whether it is in equilibrium at all. Fatalistic rationality is not a rationality of indifference, but a rationality where individuals do not believe in the controllability of the world. The strong grid is externally determined and, owing to the weak group dimension, exerting influence on the grid is not possible.

These four rationalities are internally consistent, mutually contradictory and jointly exhaustive (Schwarz & Thompson, 1990). They comprise a system of plausible, rather than empirically demonstrably true rationalities (Dake, 1992, p. 24). For more detailed elaboration on the theory and the rationalities, see also literature on Cultural Theory (Thompson et al., 1990; Davy, 1997; Hartmann, 2012).

### The European policy of territorial cohesion

This section will elaborate on what territorial cohesion is and how it is pursued. It briefly outlines its origins before addressing the debate on the meaning and the term “territorial cohesion”. It also explains how territorial cohesion can be considered as a leitmotif of European spatial development. As such, it is shown that the legal basis of territorial cohesion depends very much on its implementation in the member states.

The European Union as a whole can be considered as a spatial policy experiment, composed by projects in different policy fields such as regional, environmental and social policies (Vogelij 2010, p. 1). These policies determine the EU and its territorial boundaries through acts of exclusion and inclusion (Vanolo, 2010, p. 1307). These boundaries mirror different perceptions of European territory and sub-territories (Ritter & Fürst, 2009, p. 13). These are not determined by spaces of nature (e.g. rivers, mountains, coastlines), but are built on the socially constructed boundaries of common values, policies or economic activity (Hengstermann, 2011, p. 200) and take shape in institutional settings (Ekelund 2012). Recently, territorial aspects of European governance have been recognized increasingly in what can be labelled as a second ‘spatial turn’ (Ritter & Fürst, 2009, p. 13; Schlögel, 2003, pp. 60–71). This goes along with an increasing demand for the coordination of European spatially relevant policies (Robert et al., 2001, pp. 153, 158; Siehr 2009, pp. 79–80). A place-based policy is

needed (Barca, 2009), one that would be less segregated, less sectoral, more integrated, and better coordinated (Vogelij 2010).

The Treaty of Lisbon formally addresses the need for a territorial strategy by including ‘territorial cohesion’ among its general goals (Art. 3 III TEU). Hereby, the territorial dimension complemented the existing aims of economic and social cohesion, and together they generate a triangular goal as the orientation frame for European policies (Ahner & Füchtner, 2010, p. 543).

Since its first official appearance in the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997), and increasingly after its definition in primary law (2007), the term has been subject of innumerable discussions and different definitions (Abrahams 2013). Academics, policy-makers and practitioners have been attempting to understand what is meant by this vague term. Neither a detailed study of the term’s origin (Faludi 2009), nor a Green Paper (2008/2009), nor a wide survey on ESPON projects (Abrahams 2013) could deliver a common understanding. The term fits or does not fit to different cultural contexts and varying geographic scales – it is applicable to macro regions and likewise to local surroundings. Whether this vagueness is assessed as essentially positive (as it provides some flexibility and scope giving a meaning to this term), or whether some it hinders the implementation of territorial cohesion, depends very much on the perspective – or rather rationality – of the assessor, as it will become clear later on.

The coalition behind the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP, 1999) and its follow-up document, the Territorial Agenda (TAEU, 2007 & 2011), does not provide any further specification of the term. It understands territorial cohesion as a set of principles underpinning multiple objectives: a harmonious, balanced, efficient, sustainable territorial development (ESDP 1999); spatial solidarity; and “convergence between the economies of better-off territories and those whose development is lagging behind” (TAEU, 2011, pp. No. 8). In short, the goal is to enable “equal opportunities for citizens and enterprises, wherever they are located, to make the most of their territorial potentials” (TAEU, 2011, pp. No. 8).

It can only be stated that the term outlines a “new, officially agreed policy objective for the development of Europe’s territory” (Vogelij 2010, p. 2), and the related policy field “is still very much in the making” (Luukkonen & Moilanen, 2012, p. 428).

Territorial cohesion serves as a leitmotif, offering a direction of thinking, but has to be interpreted constantly for each and every situation and context. In this sense, it is not different from other concepts of modern management and governance processes (Vogelij 2010, p. 2). Even the term spatial planning itself has different meanings throughout Europe and includes different ap-

proaches to influencing spatial developments (Hillier 2010), which could be a reason why the new term of territorial cohesion was created.

Putting aside the quest for a precise definition, the conceptual characteristics of territorial cohesion appear in three dimensions (Battis and Kersten 2008, p. 7):

- territorial balance,
- territorial integration,
- territorial governance.

These dimensions frame the concept in order to provide a proper tier of European planning, which goes beyond the sum of 28 national planning approaches (Hengstermann, 2012, p. 51).

Territorial balance represents the normative dimension; it implies that spatial disparities shall be reduced. Territorial cohesion policy is differentiated according to places and geographical context according to the particular function. Such spatial solidarity requires and supports the development of endogenous potential in accordance with responsibility for the overall space. This leads to a territorial balance that is not meant as homogeneity, but as equal potentials.

The (vertical and horizontal) territorial integration of different sectoral policies with spatial impact regards functional spaces irrespective of administrative and state borders. In doing so, ad-hoc spaces are defined on the basis of political challenges and technical, societal and natural tasks. This affects a variety of places with generally equal opportunities but different spatial potentials.

The third dimension represents the method of operation called territorial governance; it corresponds with a multi-level governance approach. Instead of central government only, spatial development is governed by a comprehensive network across levels and actors (Gualini 2006; Hajer & Wagenaar 2003).

All these basic elements of the concept of territorial cohesion provide a leitmotif, a general direction of thinking. Summarizing the debate on the definition of term territorial cohesion, the term has to be understood as an overall guideline to envisioning spatial development at the European policy level (Vanolo, 2010, p. 1303; Zonneveld & Waterhout, 2005, p. 25). Without this rather vague term, no common approach to spatial policy would be possible due to different understandings of planning across Europe. The choice of a new, unknown term without a precise definition is an attempt to give the essential leeway to different cultural understandings. Nevertheless, the function as a leitmotif restrains a clear, aligned approach; this is why critics question the concept of territorial cohesion categorically.

This understanding is also reflected in the legal basis, which is subject of many discussions and fundamental criticism as well. European primary law in-

cludes a 'shared competence' on territorial cohesion (Art. 4 II c TEU). The construction of a shared competence in primary law is not to be understood as cooperative task-sharing between the European level and the member state level. It equates more to the German principle of 'concurrent legislation' (see article 72, German constitutional law). In other words, as long as there is no superior legislation for an issue, member states may regulate it on their own (see Weber 2012).

Therefore, the EU could assume formal competence in territorial cohesion as soon as there is a common understanding and a legally sound definition. Based on current debates and varying understandings, any formal entitlement for enforcing territorial cohesion as an EU competence can hardly be justified (Vanolo, 2010, p. 1303). Thus, the competence for territorial cohesion will remain on member state level, and an EU cohesion policy via binding regulations is unlikely at the moment (Zonneveld & Waterhout, 2005, p. 25).

Summing up, territorial cohesion is a weak term and a policy area without a formal institutional power. It rather functions as a helpful vision for policies aiming at an integrated spatial, place-based development of the Union (Barca 2009). Therefore, sectoral policies must be coordinated (Schäfer, 2005, p. 48). The tension between the actual influence of the European Union on territorial development via sectoral policies and the lack of a formal competence in spatial planning itself requires some kind of a moral obligation to implement spatial planning (Fürst, 2010, p. 181). Therefore, territorial cohesion needs to add tangible added value to spatial policies to be accepted by them as an overall leitmotif without legal competence. In this way, the overall goal of territorial cohesion can generate actual effects on spatial development and implement such development via various policy fields. Pursuing the Lisbon Treaty's goal depends on building coalitions with spatial policies.

### Applying Cultural Theory to European spatial policy

In the following section, the basic features of Cultural Theory are applied to the question of how coalitions between the European Territorial Cohesion Policy and spatial policies could function.

#### *Four ideal types of coalitions*

According to the previously outlined four rationalities of Cultural Theory, four different ideal types of coalitions between the European Territorial Cohesion Policy and spatial policies can be designed. These ideal types are an abstraction of real coalitions in spatial planning. In line with Weber, the ideal types are de-

signed as generalized and simplified types, leaving out particular features from practice and stressing others. The criteria for their design are derived from the four rationalities of Cultural Theory. However, the different types of strategies that can be identified in the practice of regional development match the four abstract ideal types below pretty well (Wiechmann, 2008). Each type is consistent within one rationality, but irrational from the perspective of the other three.

To describe and compare the differences between the four types of coalitions, the components 'problem', 'objective', and 'method' are used to characterize them. These three components are derived from Schönwandt and Voigt (2005, pp. 770–772). Planning problems are evaluations of current situations that are perceived as undesirable or inconvenient by the evaluating subject; planning objectives are defined as desirable or more convenient future situations; and planning methods contain the legal and social rules and norms (institutions) applied to implement the planning objectives. As Schönwandt and Voigt point out, the three components are very much dependent on the rationalities of the stakeholders (Schönwandt & Voigt, 2005: 770). Schönwandt and Voigt originally referred to 'background knowledge', but the term 'rationality' covers better what is meant: an inherently consistent and logical way of thinking (see also Davy, 2008; Hartmann, 2012). So they are suitable for the following thought experiment of designing four ideal-typical coalitions.

**Table 1** Four types of coalitions

	<b>HIERARCHIC: COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING</b>	<b>INDIVIDUALISTIC: COMPETITION OF PROJECTS</b>	<b>EGALITARIAN: COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>FATALISTIC: REACTIVE MANAGEMENT</b>
<i>Problem</i>	Missing leadership, unclear responsibilities, institutional diversity	Too few incentives for initiatives and too many administrative obstacles	Lobbyism and institutionalism obstruct the public interest	Policy fields are too complex and too different
<i>Objective</i>	Integrated programme on territorial cohesion and sector policy	Projects that combine territorial cohesion and sector policy	Common vision on territorial cohesion and sector policy	No particular alliance
<i>Method</i>	Synoptic planning approaches	Tendered competition of ideas for alliance projects	Participation and collaborative planning	Ad hoc short-term collaboration

Table 1 summarizes the four ideal types of coalitions resulting from pure application of the theory to the task of forming coalitions between two or more policy fields. The following four approaches to coalitions can be identified:

The first column in Table 1 presents the hierarchic approach. The problem of establishing a coalition between the European Territorial Cohesion Policy and spatial policies is seen in missing leadership, unclear responsibilities between the policy fields, and complex institutional arrangements. Consequently, the objective of such a rationality is to set up a programme that integrates the two fields. This will be achieved by synoptic planning approaches. The resulting strategy could be named 'comprehensive spatial planning'.

The problem with a coalition between the European Territorial Cohesion Policy and spatial policies from an individualist perspective is that good ideas for collaboration in different policy fields are not rewarded owing to administrative and institutional barriers. The rational response is to encourage innovative pilot projects that combine policy fields by using, for example, competitive project funding.

The egalitarian description sees the problem in a missing focus on the greater public interest. It is hindered by lobbying in policy fields and rigid institutional framing. Hence, what is needed is a common vision of spatial development – actually, of Europe. Its methods of choice include participation and open collaborative processes. The strategy is built on a common vision which leads to a pattern of collective behaviour of many entities. From an egalitarian standpoint, this is the most rational approach to establishing a coalition between policy fields. Such cooperative schemes require fewer top-down structures. In fact, they work because of a lack of hierarchy and a strong emphasis on collaborative schemes, as for example Healey describes them (Healey, 2003).

The fatalistic approach sees the emergence of coalitions more or less a question of luck and fate as to whether the acting entities occasionally work in the same direction. We call this 'reactive spatial development'. Due to the belief in the uncontrollability and complexity of the policy fields, no long-term strategy is advised, but rather coalitions are just ad hoc collaborations that react to certain short-term events.

This thought experiment shall show how the pursuit of different rationalities results in different coalitions. It is, however, remarkable that there can be found empirical indicators of the existence of the four types in literature on strategy building and spatial planning coalitions. In his analysis of regional planning in Germany, Wiechmann (2008) brings up four different types of coalitions (Wiechmann, 2008, pp. 252–254) without making reference to Cultural Theory (so that the argument of a biased empirical research can be rejected).

The first of these four types is called ‘strategic spatial development’. It uses synoptic planning approaches based on ‘rational’ analyses as well as strong and binding decisions. ‘Project-oriented networking’ is the second type of coalitions. It rejects big plans; rather, it prefers projects that achieve local developments without imposing strict regulations. One can regard this approach as the market approach. The third type is ‘cooperative planning’. It focuses on broad participation of stakeholders and consensual decision making. This approach fits with what is known as collaborative planning in planning theory (Healey, 2003; Healey, 2009). Voluntary agreements and mutual trust are important elements. The fourth type is labelled as ‘strategic project management’. It assumes that spatial development is not predictable, and so (long term strategic) planning is the only possible option. The reason is that the entire socio-economic system is too complex and has to cope with uncertainty. Such an approach pursues projects without a particular strategic steering mechanism. The sum of a project will emerge in a pattern, which can be considered as a strategy *ex post*. Therefore, Wiechmann identifies in his analysis four fundamental and even contradictory types of regional planning. ‘Strategic spatial development’ fits hierarchic rationality, ‘project-oriented networking’ almost ideal-typically represents the ideals of individualist rationality, ‘cooperative planning’ describes exactly how egalitarians would approach regional planning coalitions, and ‘strategic project management’ is easy to assign to fatalistic rationality. This can be regarded as empirical support for the existence of the four types of rationalities in spatial planning.

In summary, four ideal-typical approaches to coalitions can be designed. The example of Wiechmann’s empirical research shows that these can even be found in practice. The ideal types described above are exaggerated and designed according to one of the rationalities each. They are mere analytical constructions to benchmark existing practices and categorize approaches to coalitions between spatial policies and territorial cohesion. This complicates the challenge of establishing coalitions between the European Territorial Cohesion Policy and spatial policies because the four types of coalitions are organized according to contradictory principles. The question emerges which one is to choose, or how to come to a comprehensive European Territorial Cohesion Policy. Here, the concept of clumsy solutions can help.

### A clumsy solution for territorial cohesion

Cultural Theory not only helps in categorizing the four strategies as described and illustrated above, but also postulates that all four rationalities emerge in each and every social situation. According to the ‘impossibility theorem’

(Thompson et al., 1990, p. 87), it is impossible for one of the rationalities to be drowned or superseded permanently (although it can be temporarily less dominant). This has crucial consequences for developing strategies because Cultural Theory presumes that each of the four rationalities has its justification, thus none can be rejected as irrational. The four are contradictory, but each has its own rational strategy – as illustrated in the previous section. From the point of view of the other rationalities, each strategy appears irrational. So the missing rationalities will most likely reject the prevalent strategy (for a detailed explanation, see Thompson et al., 1990). In short, solutions that do not include all four rationalities cannot persist.

For the field of spatial policymaking, the impossibility theorem has been described empirically. Davy’s study on regional cooperation in the Ruhr area found that the four rationalities emerge in such situations and explained how they frame solutions (Davy, 2004). Hartmann developed a clumsy solution for the field of flood risk management. He explained how the four rationalities dominate certain situations in floodplains, and how this dominance influences the management of these areas (Hartmann, 2011). Establishing a coalition between the European Territorial Cohesion Policy and spatial policies is not a question of choosing a strategy following one of the four rationalities described above, but rather a question of incorporating elements of all four of these strategies. However, from the limited perspective of any single rationality, such a polyrational solution can never be perfect, and rather appears a bit irrational because of incorporating elements of the other rationalities. Verweij and Thompson therefore use the term ‘clumsy solution’ to describe a polyrational solution (Verweij & Thompson, 2006). On a side note, it is important to recognize that the term ‘solution’ is in fact misleading. A solution is always a response to a problem. Social constructivist approaches (such as Cultural Theory), however, acknowledge that the perception of a problem results from interpretation by a certain rationality. The solution does in fact not ‘solve’ a problem, but it responds to the plurality of worldviews. So, the inclusion of all four rationalities is its strength as well as its weakness. A clumsy solution is always a dynamic situation where the different rationalities compete to erase the clumsiness (the other three rationalities) and make it a perfect solution. This is what Thompson and his fellows call ‘permanent dynamic imbalance’ (Thompson, Ellis, & Wildavsky, 1990, p. 87).

This raises the next obvious question: how could a clumsy strategic approach to a coalition between territorial cohesion and spatial policy work? It needs to combine elements of all four types mentioned before. It is, however, more than just adding them together. A clumsy strategy must be rational enough for each rationality to be accepted by it. The hierarchic element in such

a clumsy strategy can, for example, be an institutional framework and a plan that guides the actions of stakeholders in a desired direction. However, contrary to a pure hierarchic strategy, the framework allows some scope, and it does not bind all stakeholders. This matches the idea of how the world is constituted: the ball in the landscape (see Figure 1) may roll a bit to the right or to the left, as long as it remains in the dip. The individualist element in the clumsy strategy is certain project orientation providing opportunities and incentives for innovative and experimental projects for collaboration between both policy fields. Although the ball will roll a bit uphill towards the edges, the long-term result will be the best possible situation – a stable position at the bottom of the landscape. Also, an egalitarian element is essential for a clumsy strategy. This could indeed be a common vision, which is probably not sophisticated and probably just vague but provides some orientation – as long as it is followed, the ball won't fall. Not all stakeholders will be covered by the hierarchic, individualist or egalitarian element. A clumsy strategy also needs to accept that some unexpected and uncontrollable actions may happen, and deal with non-believers. This is the fatalistic element, where the ball and the landscape do not exert influence on each other. Finally, a clumsy solution advice for setting up a coalition between the European policy field of territorial cohesion and spatial policies is to combine such elements of all four rationalities in a viable rather than perfect way. This is why it is called a clumsy solution (as opposed to a perfect solution).

Besides this potential benefit in opening one's thinking about territorial cohesion and unveiling the rationalities of the different actors, it cannot be denied that Cultural Theory is constrained by existing normative contradictions. Different policy approaches perceive problems by using different normative leitmotifs according to different rationalities. Therefore, this social constructivist approach requires careful treatment, as anyone using Cultural Theory also inherently and inevitably can be assigned to one of the rationalities. So, the advantage of confining pluralism to four rationalities thus can become a threat as well, as anyone using Cultural Theory can be blamed for acting out one of the rationalities and thus being normatively biased.

Cultural Theory does not offer a method for designing a clumsy solution that is able to cope with this dilemma – due to the constraints of the theory itself: there is no meta-rationality which one can use to design a clumsy solution. The planners of a clumsy solution probably need something like a 'veil of rationality'. John Rawls proposes a 'veil of ignorance' (Rawls, 2005, c1971) for the design of a fair social contract. In short, he suggests that – as a thought experiment – all members of a society discuss and negotiate their society without knowing their later position in society. Applied to our problem of designing

a clumsy strategy, planners need to put themselves behind a 'veil of rationality'. They will not know which rationality they adhere to. Therefore, the best thing they can do is to make the strategy as rational as possible from all four perspectives. What such a clumsy strategy for establishing a coalition will actually look like and what particular elements it will have depends on the political context in which it is developed. This could be a method for designing a clumsy strategy for a coalition that is capable of implementing the European Territorial Cohesion Policy. However, there are some discussion points and drawbacks with the idea of Cultural Theory, as shall be discussed in the conclusion.

## CONCLUSION

It has been shown that the European Territorial Cohesion Policy is a field based on a vague term and weak formal competences. In this field, it is a priori difficult if not impossible to apply traditional planning methods and instruments. Rational argument, efficiency bias, or juridical solutions fail without having a reliable definition and strong competences. Therefore, applying Cultural Theory and its clumsy solutions in such a contested and complex policy situation might reveal some of its crucial features and constraints. In addition, the article focuses on conceptual elements of the Territorial Cohesion Policy.

One of the features of Cultural Theory that comes to the fore is that although the theory derives a logic for clumsy solutions, proposing a clumsy solution in a contested policy field like the Territorial Cohesion Policy is quite demanding because a clumsy solution is per definition not totally convincing from any of the four rationalities. It is understandable that planners, policy-makers, and stakeholders strive for perfect solutions. However, Cultural Theory's framework of the four rationalities not only provides four different ways of designing a solution, but also explains how the respective other solutions will be rejected. This is an interesting added value of Cultural Theory. Thereby, the Cultural Theory perspective enables typical dichotomies to be extended by a third and fourth alternative perspective.

A crucial constraint of Cultural Theory which must not be underestimated is that it explicitly stresses normative contradictions between the rationalities (and thus between different policy approaches). This social-constructivist approach helps us better understand the Territorial Cohesion Policy debate by discerning the plurality of four rationalities. So, this paper offers not more and not less than a debate on the use of another theoretical approach to the European policy of territorial cohesion. It was not intended to provide empirical proof, as this would have curtailed the theory. Empirical research on the four



rationalities within the policy field is missing as well as approaches to cope with the weaknesses of clumsy solutions. It also needs to be verified empirically if the clumsy solutions discussed here can indeed become real solutions. However, this contribution is primarily an attempt to elaborate how Cultural Theory can contribute to find such solutions in practice – it is thus a deductive application of the theory (Cuthbert, 2011). More empirical research like the work by Wiechmann (2008) needs to be conducted and interpreted in an inductive way to see if and how there is indeed a match between what the theory predicts and what happens on the ground. Nonetheless, there has been a discussion about a theoretical model of integrating territorial cohesion within spatial policies – without getting lost in the endless debate about the lack of definitions or legally binding competences.

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